



U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON

Finance

SENATOR CHUCK GRASSLEY, OF IOWA - CHAIRMAN

<http://finance.senate.gov>

MEMORANDUM

To: Reporters and Editors
Fr: Jill Gerber, 202/224-6522
Re: Medicare and prescription drugs
Da: Friday, Jan. 24, 2003

Sen. Chuck Grassley, chairman of the Committee on Finance, today made the following remarks regarding news reports on the President's plan to strengthen and improve Medicare:

"I welcome ideas like the President's on making Medicare a better deal for older Americans. And I appreciate the President elevating the importance of this issue with his involvement. Adding prescription drug benefits is a priority of mine this year, and I'm looking forward to considering all options when it comes to doing so in a common sense way that doesn't break the Medicare bank.

"At the same time, we've got to bring Medicare into the 21st century by strengthening and improving its basic benefit package -- an idea I championed last year in my 'tripartisan' 21st Century Medicare Act with Senators Hatch, Snowe, Breaux and Jeffords. Improvements like free preventive services, protection against high out-of-pocket costs and simpler, more affordable copayments are long overdue.

"Now that the President has put forward his ideas for how to improve Medicare, it's our job to consider his proposal and all other proposals. We need to get this work done. Naturally, any proposal is going to evolve as it goes through the legislative process. Getting the job done in the Senate will require a bipartisan approach, and I'm looking forward to working with my Finance Committee colleagues on both sides of the aisle to develop a proposal that can attract broad support for passage by the full Senate before Labor Day."